

# The Light of the Gospel in the Dark Abyss of Addiction

## *Session 3*

### Lesson Summary

#### **Main Passages**

1 Peter 5:6-9; James 1:12-15

#### **Session Outline**

1. The Reality of Sin (1 John 1:8)
2. Our Two Enemies (1 Peter 5:6-9)
3. Hope for Cleansing (James 1:12-15)

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#### **Theological Theme**

By God's grace and power, we can stand firm, stand together, and resist choices which lead us into an abyss of addiction. Those who are already trapped in addiction also have hope that there is freedom in Christ.



## Leader Guide

# The Light of the Gospel in the Dark Abyss of Addiction

### Introduction

- ❓ How much do you know about fishing? What would you say is the most important part of fishing?
- ❓ What makes an effective fishing lure?

A fisherman can make all sorts of preparations for a successful fishing trip. He may gas up his boat, carefully choose the perfect spot, and use the most expensive rod and reel. Yet, if the lure he uses doesn't attract a fish, it was all for naught. Other preparations are important, but none as important of having the right bait. The lure needs to not only appear to be natural in the environment, but also arouse the fish's desire to consume it.

The devil's schemes follow these same principles. We are not tempted by things that don't appeal to us. Satan knows he must appear "as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14) because we would flee to God from him if he appeared in a way that accurately represented his wickedness. The enemy designs lures that attract us. Satan doesn't know everything like God does, but he is intelligent. Have you taken the bait? Are you entangled in the web of sin? Do you feel as though you are enslaved to an addiction?

### Session Summary

As Christians, we recognize the duality of moral responsibility and bondage. We make decisions to indulge in certain behaviors, and these behaviors can enslave us. It is as if addictions are a voluntary slavery. However, there is hope. When we put our hope in God and focus on Him, we can be confident that we can endure trials. It is by His grace and power, we can stand firm, stand together, and resist choices which lead us into an abyss of addiction.

## 1. The Reality of Sin (1 John 1:8)

Satan is intelligent. He may be the most wicked of beings, but he is also one of the craftiest and subtlest beings. His aim is to do great harm to God's creation. He delights in crippling the children of God. The devil employs two primary approaches in the world that serve as platforms from which he deploys his tactics. He seeks to lay one of two foundations. In the West, he has labored to convince the general population that he does not exist. What an effective strategy! If a person is walking through the woods and doesn't believe any poisonous snakes live there, then they will expend no energy whatsoever on watching out for them and preventing bites. They won't keep their eyes on the trail, and won't wear protective boots. They won't carry a snake bite kit because they believe there is no point. We can see how this is an effective strategy of the enemy. If we don't believe that he exists, then we will not, as Peter exhorted, "be alert."

The second strategy of Satan is not to hide his existence, but to make it so shocking that people tremble before him. If a person is more afraid of Satan's power than anything else, then that person becomes his subject and follower, even if he hates Satan. This strategy is more prevalent in the Global South.

When a society believes that Satan doesn't exist, it will also begin to bring other beliefs in line with that core doctrine. A natural consequence of the denial of the wicked one is the denial of wickedness. If we don't believe in Satan, we will eventually stop believing in sin.

 How would you answer someone who says sin is just a human invention that has no basis in universal truth?

It is impossible to follow Jesus without believing in sin. A person must recognize themselves as a sinner in need of a Savior, and then repent, if they are to be born again. But the general culture around us has a very different view of sin and wrongdoing. The biblical view of sin is now considered outdated, bigoted, and hateful. The real sin, according to many, is being intolerant and judging others to be sinful.

 How would you define sin? Why is it important that we understand this clearly?

Sin is a deviation from the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures; it's doing what God forbids or not doing what God commands. Sin is when we turn aside from the way of God and choose to follow our own way. The Bible is clear that there is only one path, one way. God has made His will and law clear in the Bible and any deviation whatsoever is an offense against Him. All we have to do is look around us or watch the news to find stomach-turning cases of outright rebellion against a holy God.

- Application: How seriously do you view your sin? Why is it important that we see our sin clearly in order to appreciate God's solution for our sin?

## 2. Our Two Enemies (1 Peter 5:6-9)

The Bible portrays our efforts against sin as a battle. But followers of Jesus can only be successful in this battle if we properly identify our enemies.

- According to these verses, what two enemies do we have in the battle against sin?

### God Cares for You

Peter's first-century readers, like their twentieth-century cousins, failed to remember this truth even in the midst of anguish and pain: God cares for you. The form in which the verb appears (present active indicative with the dative) indicates that God's care and concern for believers is constant, ongoing, and unending. God is not indifferent to the suffering of his followers, but desires our active, humble trust in him, especially during difficult days.

Peter wrote, "Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is one enemy of our souls. He and his demons continually scheme to try and draw people away from God.

The second enemy we must face is our own flesh. James wrote, "But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire" (James 1:14). When we are born again, we are made a new creation and given a new nature, yet we are still plagued by the influence of the old sin nature. While Christians are no longer enslaved to sin, we are still affected by it and must be vigilant against it.

- How did Peter say we should fight against these enemies? How does this connect to addiction?

These enemies conspire to attack all people and lead them down the path of wickedness. Outside of Jesus, we cannot fight against these temptations with any effectiveness. Christians, however, do have the ability to overcome the wiles of the devil and the desires of the flesh. The text gives us some insight about how to battle.

Peter gave four commands to help us fight against Satan in the power of Jesus:

1. Be sober-minded and alert.
2. Resist him.
3. Be firm in the faith.
4. Know that fellow believers are suffering too.

If we will stay alert for temptations, resist the devil and our own evil desire, stay full of faith, and remember that we are not alone in this battle, then we will have greater success in our efforts to obey God in all things. These strategies help keep us from falling into sinful addictions and will also help us escape addictions in which we find ourselves.

If you are a Christian, you should continually come to Christ for forgiveness and rely on Him for cleansing just as much as you did the day you first called on him. John wrote that Christians have an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). It would be a terrible thing if we had received forgiveness of sins at one time, but then were expected to live a perfectly sinless life from then on. We would be no better off than if we had no relationship with Christ.

Further, we may confidently invite others who are lost in sin and addictions to come to Christ. We do not have to wonder about or doubt the truth that Jesus Christ will never turn away a soul who comes to Him for mercy. We can and should proclaim the gospel message with confidence because we know the promise is indeed true.

Finally, for those trapped in addiction, with very little hope in this world and a clear picture of just how low you are, then the application for you is clear: run to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid. Do not hesitate. Christ calls you to come to Him and receive new life. God the Father draws you there. All those who come to Christ humbly seeking mercy will never be cast out. You are included in that promise.

 Application: Would you consider yourself alert and ready to battle sin? What can you do to make yourself more ready for battle?

### 3. Hope for Cleansing (James 1:12-15)

James clarified a potential misunderstanding when he wrote, “No one undergoing a trial should say, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn’t tempt anyone” (1:13). God is not the One who tempts us. It can be difficult to understand and reconcile God’s control and man’s responsibility, but the Scriptures are clear that the sins of a person are the responsibility of that person. No one can legitimately say that they have fallen in sin because God made them do it. This is a misrepresentation of the nature and character of God, and it is a denial of responsibility, which is in itself sinful.

James went on to write that when sin is fully conceived it gives birth to death (1:15). All who remain in their sin will die (see Ezekiel 18:20). If it weren’t for Christ, we would be condemned to death: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).



How does the work of Jesus offer freedom for those facing addiction?

Jesus Christ became the Mediator between sinful people and a holy God. Jesus interceded on behalf of God’s people so that they would be spared from the destruction they deserved. Jesus continues to intercede for His own (Hebrews 7:25). As 1 Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.” And 1 John 2:1 says, “My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one.” Finally, Romans 8:34 says, “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.” Let those glorious truths sink in. Jesus is mediating between those who have trusted Him and God the Father.



How did Jesus mediate between sinners and God to reconcile people to God? How has this impacted your life? If you are a follower of Jesus, how has He given you freedom? If you aren’t yet following Him, where do you need freedom?

Jesus, being fully God and fully man, did what we were unable to do. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. Jesus always did what God the Father commanded, and He never did what God the Father prohibited. He pleased God the Father in every way (Matthew 3:17).

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, explained how Christ's perfect obedience helps us: "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Holy, righteous Jesus submitted Himself to a sinner's death and took the punishment we deserve upon Himself. Jesus Christ, God the Son, took the wrath of God the Father toward our sin upon Himself on the cross! But that's not all: He canceled the debt we owed, and He credited our account with His righteousness.

 Application: How is God speaking to you about sin you feel trapped in today?

## Conclusion

All people have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard. Because of this sin, all people stand condemned before a holy God and deserve death. Yet, we aren't without hope. Jesus said He will never cast out any who come to Him humbly seeking mercy. Therefore, we should not be discouraged from going to Christ, but should throw ourselves at His feet for mercy. Christ has done the work we need and now mediates and intercedes for His people.

 How has today's lesson encouraged you about the freedom that is possible in Jesus, no matter how trapped you feel?

 How should the love and grace of Christ toward sinners drive us to compassion for those trapped in addiction?

 Who do you need to share the hope of Jesus with today?

## Prayer of Response

*Take time to pray together in light of the truths that you have learned from this passage. Ask God to give you a clear picture of the danger and destruction of sin. Petition God to make you sensitive to sin in your life and cause you to grieve over it and repent of it.*

## Additional Resources

- *Your First Step to Celebrate Recovery* by John Baker
- *1-2 Peter* by R.C. Sproul
- *Be Mature* by Warren Wiersbe

## Disciples Multiplying Disciples



### DxD This Week

#### ***Call to Action:***

Participate in events or with ministry partners who are helping people with addictions to hear the gospel and recover.

## For Next Week

### Session Title

- Gospel Love: Biblical Marriage and Infidelity

### Main Passages

- Genesis 2; Ephesians 5

### Session Outline

1. Instituted by God (Genesis 2:15-25)
2. Counter-Cultural (Ephesians 5:22-25)
3. A Picture of the Gospel (Ephesians 5:25-33)

### Memorize

*Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.*

- 1 Peter 5:8

# Historical Context of 1 Peter

## Purpose

First Peter emphasizes that suffering is normal for believers because they are temporary residents in this world. As such, they lack rights and receive no justice in this foreign land. Though suffering occurs on earth for temporary residents, their inheritance and exaltation await them in their eternal homeland.

## Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He viewed himself as a divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus himself. Several statements in the letter indicate that the Peter who plays a prominent role in the Gospels is the author. For example, he called himself an “elder and witness” to Christ’s sufferings (5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (2:21–24).

## Setting

Peter wrote to encourage suffering believers in Asia Minor to stand firm for Christ in the midst of persecution. He urged them to do so by focusing on their spiritual privileges and, more specifically, the place where their rights and privileges lay: the next life. Believers in Jesus are “exiles” (1:1; 2:11) and “strangers” (2:11) in this world, a land of sojourn where they have no real rights or privileges. Inheritance rights, privileges, and justice for Christians really belong to another realm to which God has delivered believers—heaven, their ultimate home.

## Special Features

First Peter provided encouragement to suffering believers living in northern Asia Minor who faced intense persecution. The letter encourages faithfulness while under oppression. Specifically, God’s holy people should lead distinctive lifestyles as temporary residents in a foreign land. Although they will suffer for Christ while in this non-Christian world, they should remember that heaven is their future homeland.

## Extended Commentary

### 1 Peter 5:6-9

5:5b–7 Peter reminded all believers to practice humility and trust God with their cares. Humility commends us to God and fellow humans, and this is the opposite effect of arrogance and conceit.

5:8–9 Peter warned believers to be aware of Satan’s deceitful practices and to resist him firmly. Such behavior is fitting for temporary residents of this world. Peter strengthened his readers with the knowledge that other Christians were also suffering.<sup>1</sup>

### James 1:12-15

1:12 Blessed reflects the understanding that a person who walks in the paths set by the Lord sees his plight in terms of the eschatological hope that awaits him. Set within this context, his current troubles seem fleeting.

1:13–18 The term trial (v. 13) connects this group of verses to the preceding section (vv. 2–12). God’s relationship to temptation is made clear by two kinds of statements. On the one hand, there are assertions that clarify what God is not or does not do: God is not tempted ... and he himself doesn’t tempt. On the other hand, there are assertions as to what things do come from God: every good and perfect gift.

1:13–14 The twofold negative stance (God is not tempted and he himself doesn’t tempt anyone) emphatically denies that God leads people into temptation. The source of temptation is one’s own evil desire. “Desire” focuses on the immediacy that carnal desire creates, spurring a person to act, to be drawn away and enticed like a fish is baited to bite a hook and is then pulled from the water.<sup>2</sup>

## References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. *Ibid.*

## Author Bio

### John Baker (Your First Step to Celebrate Recovery)

John Baker is the founder of Celebrate Recovery®, a ministry started at Saddleback Church in 1991. John also served as the Pastor of Saddleback Church's Signature Ministries and was a nationally known speaker and trainer in helping churches start Celebrate Recovery ministries. John's writing accomplishments include Celebrate Recovery's The Journey Begins Curriculum, Life's Healing Choices, the NIV Celebrate Recovery Study Bible (general editor), and Your First Step to Celebrate Recovery. He also is the coauthor of The Celebrate Recovery Devotional and, with his son Johnny, the coauthor of Celebrate Recovery's The Journey Continues curriculum. John is survived by his wife Cheryl, the cofounder of Celebrate Recovery, and was married for more than five decades.

### R.C. Sproul (1-2 Peter)

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.

### Warren Wiersbe (Be Mature)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of *Back to the Bible*, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as "the pastor's pastor." He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.